

# THE CATHOLIC ART QUARTERLY



1955·MICHAELMAS·VOL·XVII·N<sup>o</sup>4



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# THE TWO PATHS

Any association which is set up for the fostering of art, and particularly one which tries to base itself upon Christian principles, is up against the problem of images right from the start: images seen with the eye, or verbal images which address themselves to the ear. But one deep-seated truth about images is seldom discussed. We should like to mention it briefly here.

Most of our thinking is done in terms of mental images, so our instinctive need for them is natural and right. But such is the disproportion between God's infinity and our finiteness, his limitlessness and our limitations, that any images we may make of him must necessarily contain much falsehood as well as some truth. This dilemma is behind the principle of the twofold path. There are two ways in which to approach the problem of describing the Indescribable. They are contradictory and must be in some way reconciled.

The first is the *Via Positiva*, or the Way of Affirmations. We think: God is good, God is all-powerful, God is all-merciful, God is all-just, etc. That is to say, we use our own inadequate ideas of goodness, power, mercy, justice, etc., as analogies of divine attributes which in themselves are utterly beyond our mental scope. We accept our human limitations, and behave as if they did not exist. We affirm the validity of the images we use.

This method of affirmation is that used by poets, painters, and by all lovers. They see the created universe and all that it contains as sacramental. Everything God has made shines with a radiance which it owes to its Creator, to the fact of its creaturehood. It is the task of the poets and all other artists to show these celestial glories to the rest of us whose eyes are not so clear. If everything God has made shines with his glory, then everything he has made is, in some sense, his image, and can be used as

an image in our relation to him, whether of adoration, understanding, or supplication. The heavens declare the glory of God. For those who are dim of sight, the poet reaffirms these glories. "This," he says, pointing to the starry sky, "is he. This, in some sense, is he." The poet is positive. He affirms. But he must remember, too, the weakness and insufficiency of his affirmations, and St. Thomas has warned us all that: "nothing can be spoken of God except allegorically."

So we have also the opposite way, the *Via Negativa*, the path of denial, the denial of the validity of images. As the poets, the painters, and lovers, in general, tend to assert what identity there may be between Creator and creature, the contemplatives of the cloisters tend to assert the non-identity between them. With minds full of the realization of the inadequacy of our anthropomorphic mental processes, they deny that our words can be used to describe the majesty of God at all. They say: "God is not good (as we know goodness on our level). God is not all-powerful, all-merciful, all-just, etc. These little human words are so inadequate that we are less deluded if we do not use them. It is a matter of argument if it is proper even to say GOD IS, for what do we know of the mystery of being? Our keenest ontologists can tell us very little about it. They, too, have minds definitely limited." Realizing this, contemplatives tend to abandon images and use the negative formula. Of any created thing, of any divine image, they say, "This is *not* he."

As artists, as image makers, whether of words which exist in time, or of three dimensional objects which exist in space, it behooves us to understand the contradiction of these two points of view, and to understand their reconciliation. To be hale and sound in our attitude to our work, we



must understand the two formulae taken together. We must learn to say, and to think: "This is he; and this is not he."

Only so can our work have a humility and a charity, in the absence of which virtues it will be quite valueless.



## ON THE NATURE OF THE ICON

*Raising the question about the nature of a true religious image, Mr. Carey shows by word and illustration what constitutes iconography at its highest level.*

*By Graham Carey*

What can we say about the inner nature of the true religious representation? How can we urge artists to make their work in the service of the Church, real, genuine, authentic, if we cannot help them to distinguish the boundaries of truth and falsehood? For a proper image of a holy personage exists not merely to aid concentration in prayer, but to instruct the worshiper as to the nature of that which he worships. An icon must therefore be a representation where *essence* is emphasized and *appearance* is perhaps neglected. It exists to display an essential nature, and needs only so much identity of appearance as to enable it to do this. The truth that we are seeking here is not an equivalence of sensory impressions, but an equivalence of ideas. Such a statement is a little abstract and it may be more useful if somewhat expanded. Let me illustrate what I have to say with the help of three examples, beginning with the simplest and ending with the most complex.

For my first example, let me choose that old standby of the philosophical classroom, the chair. I invite you to imagine a plain wooden chair, a chair of philosophy, and with it two representations of it—one a working drawing at full size, and the other an impressionistic study.

Now between the working drawing and the object it represents there is no identity of material. The drawing is made of paper

and ink, while the chair is made of wood, screws, glue, and varnish. Nor is there any identity in the field of efficiency. The drawing was made by a draftsman with the instruments of draftsmanship, while the chair was produced by a furniture maker equipped with lathes, saws, and gluepots. Nor are the purposes of drawing and chair the same. The purpose of the drawing is to instruct, to convey certain knowledge to a mind, whereas the chair is made to be sat on, which is a service to the body.

But when we come to the realm of idea and of image, what in strict philosophical language is called *forma*, or formal cause—that element in the production of anything that establishes it according to its own special nature, and makes it this kind of thing rather than that—when we come to this aspect of the chair and the drawing, we must admit that they are identical. They have *the same form*. The designer, pointing to the piece of paper, may even use these words to the craftsman: "This is the chair I want you to make today. This piece of paper here in my hand *is* the assemblage of sticks that I want you to put together on your bench." The drawing only exists that the craftsman may receive into his mind the thought of the designer, and therefore, if it is a good drawing, the *form* of the one must be identical with the form of the other. Formally considered, the two objects are the same.

But what of the other representation, the pseudo-icon? Monet was a great im-



pressionist painter. In his day he painted many chairs. But Monet was not much interested in the forms and inner natures of chairs and what makes them what they are in their inherent chairiness. He was passionately interested in light, and it did not matter much to him on what the light fell, and from what it was reflected, as long as he was allowed to study it, to record its effects, to bathe his imagination in it. The object of his intense interest was luminosity itself, and the chair was but a means to display of that luminosity and the indulgence of that passion. In the language of the philosophers we might say that his material object was the chair, but that his formal object was that which illuminated it. This may be, and doubtless is, fine and noble, but from the point of view of the iconography of chairs, we can only regard Monet's painting as a pseudo-icon. Chair and representation *are not* formally identical.

With an icon of this type the image maker's difficulty is one of sufficient technical knowledge. To make a good working drawing for the man at the bench, he must not only have a well-ordered and easily running imagination (which bench workmen usually do not have) but he must know as much, or almost as much, about bench work as does the craftsman himself. If he lacks the knowledge, he will give a design to the technician which will result in an ugly object, or the design will have to be changed by the workman, which will probably wreck its formal integrity. In either case, the chair will not be perfect. And the further the designer and the executor are from each other, both physically and mentally, the greater the danger of this kind of trouble will be.

To sum up, we have the wooden chair and its two images. Between the working drawing and the object there is formal identity. Image and thing are formally THE SAME. But between Monet's painting and the chair itself there is no identity, because chair and painting are formally

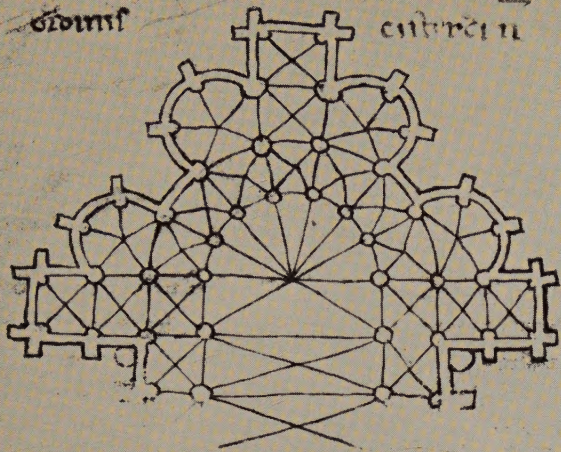
NOT THE SAME. Monet's work has quite another formal object.

Now let us take a more complex example of the same principles — the cathedral of the city of Paris, dedicated to Our Lady, and two representations of it, iconic and pseudo-iconic. Because such a work is not projected from a single mind, but is rather the result of an imaginative and constructive coöperation, so the record of the various images that make it up will be diverse in kind and multitudinous. This is particularly true of any building built before the invention of paper, or before the manufacture of large pieces of paper at low cost. The components of what, taken together, would correspond to the single working drawing of the chair are a motley assortment. Diagrams scratched on smoothed stones, or drawn with a lead point on gesso panels, scraps of vellum written over in ink, knotted strings, wooden templates, such and such like are the odd records of mental patterns that sprang from all those creative intellects, from that of the master mason — or architect — down to the humblest painter by the glass kilns. Instead of a whole image being seen all at one moment by the inner eye of one designer, thousands of images have been seen, and at various times, in the imaginations of scores of designers. But, taken all together, they are what they are made to be, accurate statements of the nature of that which was to be built, and therefore they enjoy, taken together, a formal identity with it. They *are* the cathedral of Our Lady in Paris, in terms of scraps of vellum, scratched stones, and knotted strings.

Over against this rag-bag of indicative miscellanies we can set a neat piece of paper, an etching giving the appearance of the cathedral — say, one by Charles Meryon. Like Monet's painted chair, this etching has its own interest, its own purpose and place in the scheme of things, but it can not be considered an icon, as a statement of inner nature with regard



utud est presbiterium beate marie uacellensis  
 etone ordms



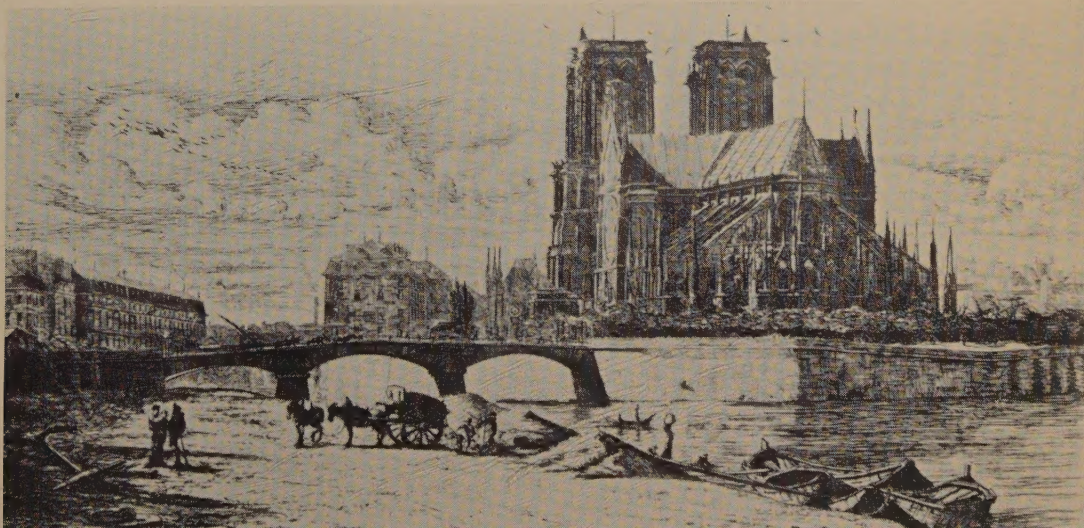
Ce est un imaie dem lientne il est cheus.



A page from the "Album" of the 13th century French architect, Villar de Honnecourt. To the left is a plan of the apse of the church of St. Mary of Vaucelles, near Cambrai. It is a typical medieval architect's drawing, indicating the walls, piers, and type of vaulting above, and nothing else. This church was dedicated in 1235, and in 1713, shortly before its destruction, it was visited by two Benedictines who described it as magnificent. Below the plan is a detail quite typical of Villar's drawing. His notebook is filled with careful studies of work which especially interested him on his travels. *Ce est un imaie dei u si cume il est cheus.* "This is an image of the way in which God fell."

*Below:* The East End of the Cathedral of Paris. Reduced from an etching by Charles Meryon. In the sense in which Mr. Carey uses the word, this is a distinctly an-iconic view of a Gothic church, in that it gives us little or nothing of the nature or essence of the building, but is a highly skillful statement of its appearance and of one of the moods that appearance may arouse. Compare this with the crude but iconic architect's plan. Both de Honnecourt and Meryon were masters.

aph courtesy of  
 College Library.







Wooden figure of Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son. This is as close as is possible to a human artist to achieve the iconographic ideal. A woman, and yet more than a woman. A mother, and more than a mother. A queen, and yet more regal than any mere queen. Such a figure, if it will allow it, will extend and deepen in the worshiper the knowledge of and love for the unfallen exemplar of humanity. Mutilated as it is, and robbed of its original color, it is the kind of icon which becomes famous because of the effect it is found to have upon those who will allow it to educate their souls.

*Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.*

Head of Christian saint by J. J. Henner in the Louvre, Paris. It was intended by the painter to be Fabiola, but on account of the seriousness and beauty of the subject has been used as an image of Our Lady. The sitter was a lovely woman, the painter was technically skillful, the conception simple and dignified. The painting cannot, however, be considered a true icon in the sense of Mr. Carey's article. The painter's equipment did not include one essential to his task: a sufficient insight into the nature of the Holy Mother's soul. As a representation of her, it is clearly an-iconic.





to the building. The reason the building could not be built from it is simply that the knowledge the builders would need is not there. It expresses not the essence of the building, which is unchanging, but merely one of its myriad appearances; not an intellectual knowledge, but a sentiment or mood. Conceivably, it might be iconic of something else, but of the great fane on the Island of the City, it is pseudo-iconic.

Quite obviously, the great difficulty in the formation of an image in the case of this kind of communal art is the difficulty of getting a large number of artists to work together. It can not be surmounted except by the exercise of the virtues, especially those of humility and charity. In our own day it has been demonstrated often enough that our deficiency in these virtues (and the very structure of our society which seems to presuppose their absence) makes the difficulties quite insuperable. In this fact lies the folly of our attempts to revive communal architectural styles, such as the Romanesque and the Gothic. You can not produce an object which depends for its existence on a certain kind of artist, unless that kind of artist is available.

So just as we had the chair, flanked by its icon and its pseudo-icon, so here we have the church with *its* two kinds of representations. The true icon, complex and disorderly as it must appear, is nevertheless true to the form of the building, is indeed identical with it. The pseudo-icon, neat as it is, and beautiful as it is in its own way, is not a statement of the building's essence or nature, but only of one of an infinitude of its possible aspects.

We come now to the most difficult and yet most important type of icon; most difficult in that it is manifestly impossible for the artist to envisage an adequate form; and important, because it is directly concerned with worship in its noblest forms. As our object we will take Our Lady herself, with a true image of her on the one hand and a false one on the other. Like the working drawing of the chair and the

huddle of miscellaneous records that corresponded to it in the coöperative art of the cathedral-builders, the true icon here is the expression in new material of a form, or natural principle. As in the other cases, this expression is, formally speaking, identical with the object whose form it shares. The icon is the materialization of the soul of the Mother of God.

It is obvious in what the difficulty with this type of iconography lies. How is any poor confused and sinful man to know enough about the realities of his subject, to be able to conceive her inner nature or envisage her image? Of course the answer is that he cannot. Or he can do so only very partially—very imperfectly. He must do the best he can, having the courage to accept the fact of his own imperfections. But, obviously, he must use his will to the uttermost, and his intellect to the limit of his powers.

The late Father Couturier was an exceptionally wise and good man, but it seems to me that his passionate desire for a *living* sacred art, and perhaps also his great personal love for friends who happened to be artists of high repute and not Christians, blinded him to certain simple truths. He wished that the officers of the Church would employ the non-Christian artists of the contemporary Parisian school to decorate Christian churches. But no man can pour tea out of a pot full of coffee, nor wine from a bottle filled to the brim with water. What is not already in, can not be expected to come out. No one can express ideas that are not part of his mental furniture. A painter who is in complete ignorance regarding the reality of holy personages and deep principles cannot express these realities in paint, or in marble, or in words, no matter how much he might wish to do so. Such an unenlightened artist can not fall back on his rating in the hierarchy of the art world. The number of places in which his works have been exhibited, the number of times that his name has appeared in print, will avail him noth-



ing. Even assuming that his high reputation is quite deserved, of what value is his sensitiveness, his ability as a colorist, his manual dexterity, and all the rest of it, if he does not know *what it is* he is supposed to say? Eloquent as the rhetorician may be, said Plato, we still must ask, "about *what* is he so eloquent?" That is the vital question.

I have not put in this parenthesis to be disrespectful to the memory of a great and holy man, nor to be rude to the owner of any great name in the world of art. I wish to clarify the problem that we are discussing, and I am sure that Father Couturier wishes it so. If the unbelieving artist finds it impossible to produce a true icon of the Blessed Mother, that does not mean that it is easy for the believing artist. Far from it. For the man of faith it is only a little less impossible. Let us turn to the consideration of the process by which formal images are generated, and see how a man may hope to break down this barrier.

The first step in the generation of a reasonably adequate image of Our Lady consists in the service of Our Lady. The artist performs this service by means of prayer and of works conformed to the laws of morality. Persistence in this humble service will in its turn generate love. (In very much lower levels we know that we grow to love that of which we take care.) Love in its turn generates knowledge. When the artist has achieved some knowledge, that grasp of the truth lives in his mind as a concept. Nay, rather, a concept has become a living part of his mental apparatus, a part of himself. He, the artist, has become, in his tiny degree, what she is. Dante explains this in the *Paradiso*. Some kinds of experiences there are which can only be expressed by saying: "Love you? I am you." When this has occurred, and the artist is, in however inadequate a degree, identified with his subject, he has reached the first stage of the artistic process. In his mind has formed an intelligible concept — even if more or less inadequate — of

Our Lady's nature.

The second stage consists of the translation of his concept into an image. We are apt to think of this image in terms of vision, as a result of the inner working of the sense of sight. But often it is concerned with some other one of the senses. In the case of the skillful draftsman it is probably much more the work of the kinaesthetic than of the visual imagination. With music, of course, the image is auditory. But whatever the sense concerned, my point here is that an image is an entirely different kind of a mental being from a concept. Yet the image derives from the concept. The image clothes the truth of the concept in terms of the causes of the artifact to be made. The image thus acts as a link between the pure and bodiless idea, and the material body which is ultimately to express that idea.

Such is the *processus duplex artis* of which St. Thomas wrote. The first part of the double process is the development of concept and image — the mental part. The second is the materialization of the image — the physical part. The image is an idea that has been given material qualifications, and thus can bridge the gulf between the worlds of form and matter, and so bridging it, bring about the hylomorphic union.

We say that a material image is true, is an icon, when material has been shaped to an image that carries with it at least some truth from its parent concept. We say that an image is great, an arch-icon, when that truth is of an especially noble and lofty nature. Arch-icons can not be expected except through the agency of wise and loving minds, creative energies of depth and power.

I am not concerned here to question the value of pseudo-iconic representations. They may or may not have their place in a well-ordered scheme of things. Here I am intent only on drawing a clear distinction between what is and what is not iconographic in the strict sense. On the one hand we have the working drawings for chair



and church and the holy image of the Great Mother. On the other are Monet, Meryon and — what? Need I describe what we all know so well? It does not seem either courteous or necessary to attempt such description. However charitable I might succeed in being toward the authors of such Marian pseudo-icons, as people, the words could all too easily be interpreted as uncharitable. Let us leave it at that.

But it is worth adding a final word. The pseudo-icon can not function as the icon does, no matter how much good will the worshiper brings to it. For he can only bring before it the knowledge and the love with which his mind and heart are already informed. He can not expect a pseudo-icon to give him what it itself lacks, which is the potentiality of deeper and wider experiences than he has yet suffered. In other words, all that the worshiper can hope for from the pseudo-icon is that it will help him to concentrate upon what is already within him. He may be lucky if it yields

him even this meager service.

And so I come to the conclusion of all this. What I have been trying to explain is the nature of true iconography at its highest levels, as exemplified here in the image of the Queen of Heaven. All that about the chair and the cathedral was only written analogically. In this essay I am no more interested in wooden chairs and stone buildings for themselves than are you, dear reader. They point here not to themselves, but to something far beyond them. But they point. Let me repeat the truth they indicate. To be a true icon an image must speak to the worshiper concerning the object of his worship. It must not only hold his attention but it must instruct. To speak thus there must stand behind it knowledge of that whereof it speaks. Behind this knowledge there must stand love. And behind the love there must have stood an act of the will, an opening up of the heart to Love Himself, "who moves the sun and all the other stars."

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*The physical function of a church is to protect the altar of sacrifice and those who surround it. The metaphysical function of a church is to instruct the worshipers as to the nature of the unseen world. Outside is the realm of appearance and illusion. Within is the realm of reality.*

*Plato says that artists make two kinds of images, two kinds of imitations of things. Some artists make images which present the sensory or surface appearance of things, and are thus illusory. Such a superficial copy he calls an idol. Other artists make images that record the inner realities of things, their actual structure and significance. Such a copy he calls an icon. The true images of the scientist and the philosopher are icons, whereas those that resemble appearances only are the work of sophists.*

*It must therefore be clear that a church can only be "decorated" (made decus, equipped as it should be) by a maker of true images, a maker of icons; and that an idol maker has no place there. For how can a man with the best will in the world, make what he is not equipped to make? A painter who is not equipped to portray visibly the invisible world, will not be successful in showing forth the structure and significance of the cosmic order. He is asked for an icon and he can only make an idol. He is asked for theology and gives only rhetoric and sophistry.*

— Graham Carey



# WHY EXHIBIT WORKS OF ART?

*A brief section of this challenging paper was published in the Quarterly shortly after Dr. Coomaraswamy presented it at the 36th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Museums in Columbus, Ohio. Because of the timeliness of the subject, and because our earlier issue is now out of print, we are here giving the complete text of the late Dr. Coomaraswamy's paper.*

By Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

What is a museum for? As the word "curator" implies, the first and most essential function of a museum is to take care of ancient or unique works of art which are no longer in their original places or no longer used as was originally intended, and are therefore in danger of destruction by neglect or otherwise. This care of works of art does not necessarily involve their exhibition.

If we ask, "Why should the protected works of art be exhibited and made accessible and explained to the public?" I shall not disagree with the answer that will be made, that this is to be done with an educational purpose. But before we proceed to a consideration of this purpose, before we ask, "Education in or for what?" a distinction must be made between the exhibition of the works of living artists and that of ancient or relatively ancient or exotic works of art. It is unnecessary for museums to exhibit the works of living artists which are not in imminent danger of destruction; or at least if such works are exhibited, it should be clearly understood that the museum is really advertising the artist and acting on behalf of the art dealer or middleman whose business it is to find a market for the artist; the only difference being that while the museum does the same sort of work as the dealer, it makes no profit. On the other hand, that a living artist should wish to be "hung" or "shown" in a museum can be only due to his need or his vanity. For things are made normally for certain purposes and certain places to

which they are appropriate, and not simply "for exhibition"; and because whatever is thus custom-made, i.e., made by an artist for a consumer, is controlled by certain requirements and kept in order. Whereas, as Mr. Steinfels has recently remarked, "Art which is only intended to be hung on the walls of a museum is one kind of art that need not consider its relationship to its ultimate surroundings. The artist can paint anything he wishes, any way he wishes, and if the curators and trustees like it well enough they will line it up on the walls with all the other curiosities."

We are left with the real problem, "Why exhibit?" as it applies to the relatively ancient or foreign works of art which, because of their fragility and because they no longer correspond to any needs of our own of which we are normally conscious, are preserved in our museums where they form the bulk of the collections. If we are to exhibit these objects for educational reasons (and not as mere curios) it is evident that we are proposing to make such use of them as is possible without an actual handling. It will be imaginatively and not actually that we must use the medieval reliquary, or lie on the Egyptian bed, or make our offering to some ancient deity. The educational ends that an exhibition can serve demand, accordingly, the services not only of a curator who prepares the exhibition, but of a docent who explains the original patrons' needs and the original artists' methods; for it is because of what these patrons and artists were that the works before us are what they are. If the exhibition is to be any-



thing more than a show of curiosities and an entertaining spectacle, it will not suffice to be satisfied with our own reactions to the objects; to know why they are what they are we must know the men that made them. It will not be "educational" to interpret such objects by our likes or dislikes, or to assume that these men thought of art in our fashion, or that they had aesthetic motives, or were "expressing themselves." We must examine their *theory* of art, first of all, in order to understand the things that they made by art, and secondly, in order to ask whether their view of art, if it is found to differ from ours, may not have been a truer one.

#### FINE OR FUNCTIONAL ARTS?

Let us assume that we are considering an exhibition of Greek objects, and call upon Plato to act as our docent. He knows nothing of our distinction of fine from applied arts. For him painting and agriculture, music and carpentry and pottery are all equally kinds of poetry or making. In this connection it is worth noting that the original meaning of the word "harmony" had to do with carpentry, and that the keystone of a vault was called its "harmony," being in fact that "head of the angle" in which all the parts of a construction are builded together, and that if we are to understand the history and significance of domes it will be essential to have known their cosmic prototype. For as Plotinus, following Plato, tells us, the arts such as music and carpentry are not based on human wisdom, but on the thinking there.

Whenever Plato speaks disparagingly of the "base mechanical arts" and of mere "labor" as distinguished from the "fine work" of making things, it is with reference to kinds of manufacture that provide for the needs of the body alone. The kind of art that he calls wholesome and will admit to his ideal state must be not only useful but also true to rightly chosen models and therefore beautiful, and this

art, he says, will provide at the same time "for the souls and bodies of your citizens." His "music" stands for all that we mean by "culture," and his "gymnastics" for all that we mean by physical training and well being; he insists that these ends of culture and physique must never be separately pursued; the tender artist and the brutal athlete are equally contemptible. We, on the other hand, are accustomed to think of music and culture, in general, as useless, but still valuable. We forget that music, traditionally, is never something only for the ear, something only to be heard, but always the accompaniment of some kind of action. Our own conceptions of culture are typically negative. I believe that Professor Dewey is right in calling our cultural values snobbish. The lessons of the museum must be applied to our life. Because we are not going to handle the exhibited objects, we shall take their aptitude for use, that is to say their efficiency, for granted, and rather ask in what sense they are also true or significant; for if those objects can no longer serve our bodily needs, perhaps they can still serve those of our soul, or if you prefer the word, our reason.

What Plato means by "true" is iconographically correct. For all the arts, without exception, are representations or likenesses of a model; which would be impossible—seeing that the forms of traditional art are typically imitative of invisible things, which have no looks—but that they are such adequate analogies as to be able to remind us, i. e., put us in mind again, of their archetype. Works of art are reminders, in other words, supports of contemplation. Now since the contemplation and understanding of these works is to serve the needs of the soul, that is to say in Plato's own words, to attune our own distorted modes of thought to cosmic harmonies, "so that by an assimilation of the knower to the to-be-known, the archetypal nature, and coming to be in that likeness, we may attain at last to a part in that 'life's



best' that has been appointed by the Gods to men for this time being and hereafter," or stated in Indian terms, to effect our own metrical re-integration through the imitation of divine forms; and because, as the Upanisad reminds us, "one comes to be of just such stuff as that on which the mind is set," it follows that it is not only requisite that the forms of art should be adequate reminders of their paradigms, but that the nature of these paradigms themselves must be of the utmost importance, if we are thinking of a cultural value of art in any serious sense of the word "culture." The *what* of art is far more important than the *how*; it should, indeed, be the *what* that determines the *how*, as form determines shape.

#### SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION

Plato has always in view the representation of invisible and intelligible forms. The imitation of anything and everything is despicable; it is the actions of Gods and Heroes, not the artist's feelings or the natures of men who are all too human like himself, that are the legitimate theme of art. If a poet cannot imitate the eternal realities, but only the vagaries of human character, there can be no place for him in an ideal society, however true or intriguing his representations may be. The Assyriologist Andrae is speaking in perfect accord with Plato when he says, in connection with pottery, that "It is the business of art to grasp the primordial truth, to make the inaudible audible, to enunciate the primordial word, to reproduce the primordial images — or it is not art." In other words, a real art is one of symbolic and significant representation, a representation of things that cannot be seen except by the intellect. In this sense, art is the antithesis of what we mean by visual education, for this has in view to tell us what things that we do not see, but might see, look like. It is the natural instinct of a child to work from within outwards: "First I think, and then I draw my think." What wasted efforts we make to teach a child to stop think-

ing, and only to observe! Instead of training a child to think, and how to think and of what, we make him "correct" his drawing by what he sees! It is clear that the museum, at its best, must be the sworn enemy of the methods of instruction currently prevailing in our schools of art.

It was anything but "the Greek miracle" in art that Plato admired; what he praised was the canonical art of Egypt in which "those modes (of representation) that are by nature correct had been held forever sacred." The point of view is identical with that of the Scholastic philosophers, for whom "art has fixed ends and ascertained means of operation." New songs, yes; but never new kinds of music, for these may destroy our whole civilization. It is the irrational impulses that yearn for innovation. Our sentimental or aesthetic culture — sentimental, aesthetic, and materialistic are virtually synonyms — prefers instinctive expression to the formal beauty of rational art. But Plato could not have seen any difference between the mathematician thrilled by a "beautiful equation" and the artist thrilled by his formal vision. For he asks us to stand up like men against our instinctive reactions to what is pleasant or unpleasant, and to admire in works of art, not their aesthetic surfaces but the logic or right reason of their composition. And so, naturally, he points out that "The beauty of the straight line and the circle, and the plane and solid figures formed from these . . . is not, like other things, relative, but always absolutely beautiful." Taken together with all that he has to say elsewhere of the humanistic art that was coming into fashion in his own time, and with what he has to say of Egyptian art, this amounts to an endorsement of Greek Archaic and Greek Geometric Art — the arts that really corresponded to the content of those myths and fairy tales that he held in such high respect and so often quotes. Translated into more familiar terms, this means that from this intellectual point of view, the art of the American Indian sand-



painting is superior in kind to any painting that has been done in Europe or white America within the last several centuries. As the Director of one of the five greatest museums in our Eastern states has more than once remarked to me, "From the Stone Age until now, what a decline!" He meant, of course, a decline in intellectuality, not in comfort. It should be one of the functions of a well organized museum exhibition to deflate the illusion of progress.

At this point, I must digress to correct a widespread confusion. There exists a general impression that modern abstract art is in some way like and related to, or even "inspired" by the formality of primitive art. The likeness is altogether superficial. Our abstraction is nothing but a mannerism. Neolithic art is abstract, or rather algebraic, because it is only an algebraical form that can be the single form of very different things. The forms of early Greek art are what they are because it is only in such forms that the polar balance of physical and metaphysical can be maintained. "To have forgotten," as Bernheimer recently said, "this purpose before the mirage of absolute patterns and designs is perhaps the fundamental fallacy of the abstract movement in art." The modern abstractionist forgets that the Neolithic formalist was not an interior decorator, but a metaphysical man who saw life whole and had to *live* by his wits; one who did not, as we seek to, live by bread alone, for as the anthropologists assure us, primitive cultures provided for the needs of the soul and the body at one and the same time. The museum exhibition should amount to an exhortation to return to these savage levels of culture.

#### CUSTOM-MADE OBJECTS FOR USE

A natural effect of the museum exhibition will be to lead the public to enquire why it is that objects of "museum quality" are to be found only in museums and are not in daily use and readily obtainable. For the museum objects, on the whole, were

not originally "treasures" made to be seen in glass cases, but rather common objects of the market place that could have been bought and used by anyone. "What underlies the deterioration in the quality of our environment?" "Why should we have to depend as much as we do upon 'antiques'?" The only possible answer will again reveal the essential opposition of the museum to the world. For this answer will be that the museum objects were custom-made and made for use, while the things that are made in our factories are made primarily for sale. The word *manufacturer* itself, meaning one who makes things by hand, has come to mean a salesman who gets things made for him by machinery. The museum objects were humanly made by responsible men, for whom their means of livelihood was a vocation and a profession. The museum objects were made by free men. "Have those in our department stores been made by free men?" Let us not take the answer for granted.

When Plato lays it down that the arts shall "care for the bodies and souls of your citizens," and that only things that are sane and free, and not any shameful things unbecoming free men, are to be made, it is as much as to say that the artist, in whatever material, must be a free man; not meaning thereby an "emancipated artist" in the vulgar sense of one having no obligation or commitment of any kind, but a man emancipated from the despotism of the salesman. If the artist is to represent the eternal realities, he must have known them as they are. In other words, an act of imagination in which the idea to be represented is first clothed in an imitable form must have preceded the operation in which this form is to be embodied in the actual material. The first of these acts is called "free," the latter "servile." But it is only if the first be omitted that the word servile acquires a dishonorable connotation. It hardly needs demonstration that our methods of manufacture are, in this shameful sense, servile, or that the industrial



system for which these methods are indispensable, is unfit for free men. A system of "manufacture," or rather of quantity production dominated by money values, presupposes that there shall be two different kinds of makers, privileged "artists" who may be "inspired," and under-privileged laborers, unimaginative by hypothesis, since they are asked only to make what other men have imagined. It has often been claimed that the productions of "fine" art are useless; it would seem to be a mockery to speak of a society as free, where it is only the makers of useless things, and not the makers of utilities that can be called free, except in the sense that we are all free to work or starve.

It is, then, by the notion of a vocational making, as distinguished from one's living by working at a job, regardless of what it may be, that the difference between the museum objects and those in the department store can be best explained. Under these conditions, which have been those of all non-industrial societies, that is to say when each man makes one kind of thing, doing only that kind of work for which he is fitted by his own nature and for which he is therefore destined, Plato reminds us that "more will be done, and better done than in any other way." Under these conditions a man at work is doing what he likes best, and the pleasure that he takes in his work perfects the operation. We see the evidence of this pleasure in the museum objects, but not in the products of chain-belt operation, which are more like those of the chain-gang than like those of men who enjoy their work. Our hankering for a state of leisure or leisure state is the proof of the fact that most of us are working at tasks to which we could never have been called by anyone but a salesman, certainly not by God or our own natures. Traditional craftsmen whom I have known in the East cannot be dragged away from their work, and will work overtime to their own pecuniary loss. We have gone so far as to divorce work from culture, and to

think of culture as something to be acquired in hours of leisure; but there can be only a hothouse and unreal culture where work itself is not its means; if culture does not show itself in all we make, we are not cultured. We ourselves have lost this vocational way of living, the way that Plato made his type of Justice; and there can



be no better proof of the depth of our loss than the fact that we have destroyed the cultures of all other peoples whom the withering touch of our so-called civilization has reached.

#### THE PATHETIC FALLACY

In order to understand the works of art that we are asked to look at, it will not do to explain them in the terms of our own psychology and our aesthetics; to do so would be the pathetic fallacy. We shall not have understood these arts until we can think about them as their authors did. The docent will have to instruct us in the elements of what will seem a strange language; though we know its terms, it is with very different meanings that we nowadays employ them. The meaning of such terms as art, nature, inspiration, form, ornament, and aesthetic will have to be explained to our public in words of two syllables. For none of these terms are used in traditional philosophy as we use them today.

We shall have to begin by discarding the term *aesthetic* altogether. For these arts were not produced for the delectation of the senses. The Greek original of this modern word means nothing but sensation or reaction to external stimuli; the sensi-



bility implied by the word *aesthesis* is present in plants, animals, and man. These sensations which are the passions or emotions of the psychologist, are the driving forces of instinct. Plato asks us to stand up like men against the pulls of pleasure and pain. For these, as the word passion implies, are pleasant and unpleasant experiences to which we are subject; they are not acts on our part, but things done to us; only the judgment and appreciation of art is an activity. Aesthetic experience is of the skin you love to touch, or the fruit you love to taste. "Disinterested aesthetic contemplation" is a contradiction in terms and a pure non-sense. Art is an intellectual, not a physical virtue; beauty has to do with knowledge and goodness, of which it is precisely the attractive aspect; and since it is by its beauty that we are attracted to a work, its beauty is evidently a means to an end, and not itself the end of art; the purpose of art is always one of effective communication. The man of action, then, will not be content to substitute the knowledge of what he likes for an understanding judgment; he will not merely enjoy what he should use (those who merely enjoy we rightly call 'aesthetes'); it is not the aesthetic surfaces of works of art but the right reason or logic of the composition that will concern him. Now the composition of such works as we are exhibiting is not for aesthetic but for expressive reasons. The fundamental judgment is of the degree of the artist's success in giving clear expression to the theme of his work. In order to answer the question, "Has the thing been well said?" it will evidently be necessary for us to know what it was that was to be said. It is for this reason that in every discussion of works of art, we must begin with their subject matter.

We take account, in other words, of the *form* of the work. "Form" in the traditional philosophy does not mean tangible shape, but is synonymous with idea and even with soul; the soul, for example, is called the form of the body. If there be a

real unity of form and matter such as we expect in a work of art, the shape of its body will express its form, which is that of the pattern in the artist's mind, to which pattern or image he moulds the material shape. The degree of his success in this imitative operation is the measure of the work's perfection. So God is said to have called his creation good because it conformed to the intelligible pattern according to which he had worked; it is in the same way that the human workman still speaks of "trueing" his work. The formality of a work is its beauty, its informality its ugliness. If it is uninformed it will be shapeless. Everything must be in good form.

In the same way *art* is nothing tangible. We cannot call a painting "art." As the words artifact and artificial imply, the thing made is a work of art, made by art, but not itself art; the art remains in the artist and is the knowledge by which things are made. What is made according to the art is correct; what one makes as one likes may very well be awkward. We must not confuse taste with judgment, or loveliness with beauty, for as Augustine says, some people like deformities.

#### THE NATURE OF ORNAMENT

Works of art are generally *ornamental* or in some way ornamented. The doctent will sometimes discuss the history of ornament. In doing so he will explain that all the words that mean ornament or decoration in the four languages with which we are chiefly concerned, and probably in all languages, originally meant equipment; just as furnishing originally meant tables and chairs for use and not an interior decoration designed to keep up with the Joneses or to display our connoisseurship. We must not think of ornament as something added to an object which might have been ugly without it. The beauty of anything unadorned is not increased by ornament, but made more effective by it. We are often told, and not quite incorrectly, that primitive ornament had a magical



value; it would be truer to say a meta-physical value, since it is generally by means of what we now call its decoration that a thing is ritually transformed and made to function spiritually as well as physically. The use of solar symbols in harness, for example, makes the steed the Sun in a likeness; solar patterns are appropriate to buttons because the Sun himself is the primordial fastening to which all things are attached by the thread of the Spirit; the egg and dart pattern was originally what it still is in India, a lotus petal moulding symbolic of a solid foundation. It is only when the symbolic values of ornament have been lost, that decoration becomes a sophistry, irresponsible to the content of the work. For Socrates, the distinction of beauty from use is logical, but not real, not objective; a thing can only be beautiful in the context for which it is designed.

Critics nowadays speak of an artist as inspired by external objects, or even by his material. This is a misuse of language that makes it impossible for the student to understand the earlier literature of art. "Inspiration" can never mean anything but the working of some spiritual force within you; the word is defined by Webster as a "supernatural divine influence." The docent, if a rationalist, may wish to deny the possibility of inspiration; but he must not obscure the fact that from Homer onwards the word has been used always with one exact meaning, that of Dante, when he says that Love, that is to say the Holy Ghost, "inspires" him, and that he goes "setting the matter forth even as He dictates within me."

*Nature*, for example, in the statement "Art imitates nature in her manner of operation," does not refer to any visible part of our environment; and when Plato says "according to nature," he does not mean "as things behave," but as they should behave, not "sinning against nature." The traditional Nature is Mother Nature, that principle by which things are

"natured," by which, for example, a horse is horsey and by which a man is human. Art is an imitation of the nature of things, not of their appearances. In these ways we shall prepare our public to understand the pertinence of ancient works of art.

If, on the other hand, we ignore the evidence and decide that the appreciation of art is merely an aesthetic experience, we shall evidently arrange our exhibition to appeal to the public's sensibilities. This is to assume that the public must be taught to feel. But the view that the public is a hard-hearted animal is strangely at variance with the evidence afforded by the kind of art that the public chooses for itself, without the help of museums. For we perceive that this public already knows what it likes. It likes fine colors and sounds and whatever is spectacular or personal or anecdotal or that flatters its faith in progress. This public loves its comfort. If we believe that the appreciation of art is an aesthetic experience we shall give the public what it wants.

#### THE ROLE OF A MUSEUM

But it is not the function of a museum or of any educator to flatter and amuse the public. If the exhibition of works of art, like the reading of books, is to have a cultural value, i.e., if it is to nourish and make the best part of us grow, as plants are nourished and grow in suitable soils, it is to the understanding and not to fine feelings that an appeal must be made. In one respect the public is right; it always wants to know what a work of art is "about." "About what," as Plato also asked, "is the sophist so eloquent?" Let us tell them what these works of art are about and not merely tell them things about these works of art. Let us tell them the painful truth, that most of these works of art are about God, whom we never mention in polite society. Let us admit that if we are to offer an education in agreement with the innermost nature and eloquence of the exhibits themselves, that this will not be an education in sensibility, but an education in philosophy,



in Plato's and Aristotle's sense of the word, for whom it means ontology and theology and the map of life, and a wisdom to be applied to everyday matters. Let us recognize that nothing will have been accomplished unless men's lives are affected and their values changed by what we have to show. Taking this point of view, we shall break down the social distinction of fine from applied art; we shall no longer divorce anthropology from art, but recognize that the anthropological approach to art is a much closer approach than the aesthetician's; we shall no longer pretend that the content of the folk arts is anything but metaphysical. We shall teach our public to demand, above all things, lucidity in works of art.

For example, we shall place a painted Neolithic potsherd or Indian punch-marked coin side by side with a Medieval representation of the Seven Gifts of the Spirit, and make it clear by means of labels or docents or both that the reason of all these compositions is to state the universal doctrine of the "Seven Rays of the Sun." We shall put together an Egyptian representation of the Sundoor guarded by the Sun himself and the figure of the Pantomime in the oculus of a Byzantine dome, and explain that these doors by which one breaks out of the universe are the same as the hole in the roof by which an American Indian enters or leaves his *hogan*, the same as the hole in the center of a Chinese *pi*, the same as the luffer of the Siberian Shamn's *yurt*, and the same as the foramen of the roof above the altar of Jupiter Terminus; explaining that all these constructions are reminders of the Door-god, of One who could say "I am the door." Our study of the history of architecture will make it clear that "harmony" was first of all a carpenter's word meaning "joinery," and that it was inevitable, equally in the Greek and the Indian traditions, that the Father and the Son should have been "carpenters," and show that this must have been a doctrine of Neolithic, or rather

"Hyllic," antiquity. We shall sharply distinguish the "visual education" that only tells us what things look like (leaving us to *react* as we must) from the iconography of things that are themselves invisible (but by which we can be guided how to *act*).

It may be that the understanding of the ancient works of art and of the conditions under which they were produced will undermine our loyalty to contemporary art and contemporary methods of manufacture. This will be the proof of our success as educators; we must not shrink from the truth that all education implies revaluation. Whatever is made only to give pleasure is, as Plato says, a toy, for the delectation of that part of us that passively submits to emotional storms; whereas the education to be derived from works of art should be an education in the love of what is ordered and the dislike of what is disordered. We have proposed to educate the public to ask first of all these two questions of a work of art, "Is it true?" or "beautiful?" (whichever word you prefer) and "What good use does it serve?" We shall hope to have demonstrated by our exhibition that the human value of anything made is determined by the coincidence in it of beauty and utility, significance and aptitude; that artifacts of this sort can only be made by free and responsible workmen, free to consider only the good of the work to be done and individually responsible for its quality; and that the manufacture of art in studios coupled with an artless manufacture in factories represents a reduction of the standard of living to sub-human levels. These are not personal opinions, but only the logical deductions of a lifetime spent in the handling of works of art, the observation of men at work, and the study of the universal philosophy of art, from which philosophy our own "aesthetic" is only a temporally provincial aberration. It is for the museum militant to maintain with Plato that "we cannot give the name of art to anything irrational."



# CONSTITUTION OF THE CATHOLIC ART ASSOCIATION

*Because the Constitution of an organization expresses its raison d'être, we are printing the Constitution of the Catholic Art Association to provide opportunity for all our members to become familiar with this important document.*

In and by and through his divine Image, God created the universe. The whole creation reflects its Maker, and every part of it mirrors him. Man, in particular, reflects him, created as he is in God's image and likeness.

Man's body gives material expression to his soul; his soul is the form of his body; and man himself is a meeting point between the material and spiritual. For the satisfaction of his needs, both physical and spiritual, he rules, controls and transforms material creation, thereby imitating his Creator in being an artist. For art is that virtue of the practical intellect by which man is enabled to make things. It includes such arranging, ordering and organizing as may be seen in agriculture, seamanship and government. To give the word a narrower significance is to destroy its essential meaning and limit its usefulness. Art being a virtue of the mind, we see that every man is by nature an artist.

Because, however, of the sin of Adam and man's loss of his original integrity, he is fully an artist only to the degree that his virtue is perfected. Furthermore, the arts of fallen man are often infected with worldliness and impiety because he tends to make and use artificial things selfishly, for their own sakes, rather than for the love of God and neighbor.

To restore all things to himself, Christ, the divine Image, became man. As the second Adam, he came to undo the work of the first, and to bring all things to a fresh perfection. In establishing his Church he sanctified the whole world, and gave to material things specific sacramental functions. In him alone can we hope to restore

all things to their rightness.

Modeling ourselves, as artists, upon the divine Exemplar, we see art as right reason in making, or as the making well of what needs to be made. And we see that right reason in the production of any object implies a proper understanding of the causes of this production. These causes are final, material, efficient and formal.

Nothing has ever been made without some purpose. The good which a thing is intended to achieve is its final cause, and it is a desire for this good that sets the artistic process in motion. The man who desires the good, and defines it, we call the patron. He is guided by prudence to choose the right purpose, while the artist is guided by his art to know and employ the right means of serving it. The end of the artist *as artist* is the good of the work to be done, and this implies the fulfilment of the particular need of his patron, either of body or of mind, or, usually, because of the integration of the physical and the spiritual, of both body and mind together in the same object. The end of the artist *as man* is ultimately the service of praise to God, and, more immediately, the service of love to his neighbor. It cannot reasonably be the worship of himself in the things he makes.

The material cause is that which receives a form in order that the end may be achieved. Nothing can be made without *some* material, and right reason demands that the right material be chosen. Material is as essential to the arts that serve the mind as it is to those that serve the body. Unless the nature of the chosen material be known and respected by the artist, he will not be able to develop a new form in harmony



with it. It is only through practice in handling it that he comes to understand and love his material.

The efficient cause is the agent which transforms the material for the achievement of the end. In making anything there must be *some* agent, and right reason will indicate the appropriate one. The agent is, from one point of view, the artist himself (the "principal" efficient cause) using his mental and bodily energies under the control of his skill or art. From another point of view, the agent is the tool or tools (the "instrumental" efficient cause) and the forces, external to the artist, which the tools enable him to express and direct. By practice with the instruments of his art, the artist makes them more and more a part of himself.

The formal cause is the mental pattern to the likeness of which the material is shaped for the desired end. Material cannot be arranged except in *some pattern*, and the intellectual virtue of the artist insures the production of the proper one. Before he can impose his image upon the material, his intellect must first conceive a formal idea, and his creative imagination see an image corresponding to it. The operation of the creative imagination is weakened by introspection and by the attempt to produce in the object qualities of design which the imagination naturally supplies. It is strengthened by the actual making of works of art.

An object, the making of which has been governed by right reason, is what it should be. One can realize its perfection as goodness, as truth, or as beauty. The realization

of beauty is an activity not of sense, but of the intellect making use of the senses. The perception of the beauty of an object gives pleasure, although the enjoyment of that pleasure is not the first reason for the existence of the object.

Since art imposes a form on a material, it can truly be said that art is imitation, but it must be understood that the artist copies an inward essence rather than an outward appearance. And, since the more firmly he possesses his art the more he desires to do his work well, it may be said that art tends to perfection, and to beauty, which is one of the aspects of perfection. All things properly made are beautiful in proportion to that propriety, even though the production of beauty was not the maker's intention.

#### AIMS

The aims of the Catholic Art Association are to restore among Catholics a true understanding and a good practice of the arts, for as artists they serve the material needs of the Church. The arts to be thus understood and practised include those that provide the necessities of everyday use as well as those that are specifically ecclesiastical.

At present, the arts are victims of that general secularization of life from which we all suffer. The Catholic Art Association cannot oppose secularism in all its aspects, but it proposes to attack this evil in the arts, for, unless these are normal—that is, practised in a way suited to human nature—there can be no flowering of Catholic culture. We can begin to correct the present state of affairs only by beginning with ourselves.

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*We are only just beginning to understand how intimately and profoundly the vitality of a society is bound up with its religion. It is the religious impulse which supplies the cohesive force which unifies society and a culture. The great civilizations of the world do not produce the great religions as a kind of cultural by-product. In a very real sense the great religions are the foundations on which the great civilizations rest. A society which has lost its religion becomes sooner or later a society which has lost its culture.*

— Christopher Dawson in *Inquiries into Religion and Culture*.



# ON THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

*To the Editor:*

The recent arrival and reading of the Constitution of the Catholic Art Association has confronted me with a principle that appears not only new and especially interesting to me, but also important to an understanding of the efficient and formal causes of art. However, I need help, and confident that this request will be considered more an opportunity to advance Catholic aims than an imposition, I ask for clarification and substantiation of the following excerpt on page three in paragraph four:

"The operation of the creative imagination is weakened by introspection and by the attempt to produce in the object qualities of design which the imagination naturally supplies. It is strengthened by the actual making of works of art."

If by "produce in the object" you mean to supply subjectively elements of design not actually informed in matter, then it would seem that the reverse of the above excerpt is true, since to supply subjectively elements of design not expressed in matter presupposes the operation of the creative imagination. And if this is the case, "actual making of works of art" must mean the action that embodies the image in the material. But this action is distinct from the creative imagination and, therefore, in no way directly affects it.

If by "produce in the object" you mean to inform the object, then I am puzzled as to the meaning of introspection and how it weakens the creative imagination and also the relevance of the last statement of the excerpt.

A brief explanation or a reference to the answer will be highly appreciated. Please accept this request primarily as an earnest

appeal for the truth and only incidentally a challenge.

*Respectfully yours,  
Stephen J. Berardi.*

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*This letter was referred to Mr. Carey who is responsible for the particular passage in the C.A.A. constitution which Mr. Berardi questions. The following is his reply:*

It is a hard passage to explain briefly, but this, at least, is my explanation of the matter. I'm sorry I can't answer the *either or* question directly, but I can't understand just what is meant, and so I will have to answer obliquely, by expanding the passage in the constitution as I understand it. I don't know what Mr. Berardi means by "supplying elements in design not actually informed in matter" though I do think I understand "to inform the object." If you make anything at all, well or badly, imaginatively or otherwise, you *inform matter*, because that is what human making consists in. All the materials an artist can use have their own form already or they would not exist as materials for his art. Except in the *artes cooperativae naturae* (such as medicine) he imposes a new form on these materials, doing as little violence as possible to the preëxisting natural form. In the coöperative arts he restores the original and damaged form to the material thing. The shoemaker imposes an image of his own on leather. The cobbler restores that form to the broken shoes which are rapidly losing it, etc. So much for what art is from the point of view of formal and material causes.

The imagination deals with images, usually thought of as visual, but also kinaesthetic, auditory, etc. These images are objects seen, felt, heard, etc., in the mind, objects of thought. As far as the mind is concerned they are sensory, but



they are not the immediate results of the stimulation of sense nerves by things in the outside world. We see images "in the mind's eye," not outwardly, but we do truly see them (and often feel and hear them also) nevertheless inwardly. These images are mental entities, but they are quite distinct from concepts, which are objects not seen but reasoned about, objects of the intellect. Images, though distinct from concepts, do usually accompany them. Discursive reason and imagination normally run parallel to one another.

Like many other vital functions, the imagination works best when free from introspection. If a child is told to play by a nagging teacher, and is continually being checked up on, and asked how his play is going, and if he is enjoying himself, and if not why not, pretty soon his play will cease to be play at all. He needs a certain freedom from restraint. The joy goes out of his play under constant cross-examination. In somewhat the same way the imagination does not function, does not see the best kind of images, if it is perpetually under discursive supervision. This is not an induction from Scholastic tests, but the result of the experience of many artists and teachers.

But if I am trying to work out a geometric theorem, I am using a part of my mind that is *not* damaged by introspection. I can invoke all the mathematical rules I can get hold of and use all possible conscious aids to the achievement of my end. Here reason is dominant and imagination has a small role to play. I am not *seeing* something that grows spontaneously in my *imagination*, but thinking out the relationship between certain scientific concepts.

Now about beauty in art. It has various aspects. There is *functional* beauty which reflects the perfect adjustment of the artifact to its *end*. There is *material* beauty which reflects the perfect adjustment of the artifact to its *material*. There is *efficient* beauty which reflects the perfect adjustment of the artifact to the various shaping

means employed. And there is *formal* beauty which an artifact shows by reason of its perfect adjustment to *the mind in which its exemplar was seen*. The psychological explanation of the affair seems to be this, and this is at the heart of the problem as I understand it.

All things in undamaged nature are beautiful. They are the works of the Divine Artist, unspoiled by the hands of fallen man. The lilies of the field are more beautiful than the royal paraphernalia of Solomon, because the artists that clothed him so gloriously are poor fallen human beings, while he who clothed the grass of the field is God. When I look at a natural scene or natural object with clear and unbiased eyes, I am aware of nothing so much as of perfection and beauty. And if I close my eyes, I can also see beauty TO THE EXTENT THAT MY IMAGINATION IS HEALTHY. To the extent that my imagination is normal, what it is supposed to be, the images I see are beautiful. This is not because I *will* them to be so, or because I *know how* to make them so, but because they just are so if I am a normal person. I take no more thought about them than do the lilies of the field. Both the lilies and the images just grow.

Now if the images I see happen to be used as artistic exemplars, if, that is, I am an experienced artist engaged in planning his work, then the exemplary cause of the thing to be made is beautiful—much more beautiful than I could make it by taking thought about it and trying to add cubits to my artistic stature. If the exemplary cause is beautiful and I am technically skillful enough to reproduce that image and that beauty with some exactness, then the artifact will reflect that beauty. (This is the reason why the good artist is always disappointed with his work. The image of it is more perfect than his execution. The "slick" artist has greater dexterity of hand than he has power of imagination, and he is not disappointed.) This beauty is formal beauty in the sense



that the perfection it manifests is an imaginative perfection. It is called by many names. The much abused word "form" is often (perhaps usually) used to cover it.

Now this formal beauty is something of which artists are very much aware, and which they very much desire to see manifesting itself in their own work. If they are imaginatively normal, they do see it, and there is no problem. If, as is almost always the case in our present society, they do not see it in their own work (the possibility of it having been killed at its source) then they still desire it and try to achieve it, or something that looks like it, in other ways. Natural rhythms are reduced to rules, proportions to geometry, a good sense of color to color systems, charts, wheels and theories. In a thousand ways we try to do analytically what our imaginations would do for us naturally if we would only let them. AND IT DOES NOT WORK.

It is a good deal like the digestion. If we eat the right foods and don't worry about it, we will have no trouble with indigestion. Once we have got peptic ulcers we have two courses open. One is to drink Bromo Seltzer and such like and try to get the effects of good health without the causes of good health. The other is to eat very simple foods and stop worrying. If our ulcers are not too bad, the latter course — reëducation and a return to first principles — will cure us. Bromo Seltzer will

only make us worse.

In the same way, the misuse of the imagination which I am here deploring, is the attempt to supply the appearances of a healthy imagination by other than imaginative means. But all the rules of design and the props and crutches cannot produce healthy imaginative work. Good artists just don't work that way. Primitives are successful not because they have better theories of art than we, bigger books of the Rules of Prosody, more elaborate Dynamic Symmetries, later editions of Meyer's *Handbook of Ornament*, more advanced courses in gestures with the thumb in picture galleries, etc., but because their imaginations are relatively undiseased.

The emphasis in all normal and traditional schools of art, civilized or savage, has always been: self-consciousness with regard to final, instrumental and material causes, and complete lack of it with regard to formal causes. If we make things in this way (the exact reverse of most art school method) we will gradually tend to get the free and healthy use of our imaginations back again. There are special therapeutic techniques also which are effective, and are used in some schools, but we could not go into these in a small paragraph in the Constitution. Simple food and no gastric worry is the best medicine for duodenal ulcers. Simple work and no formal worry is the best medicine for artistic ulcers. That is about the size of it.

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*The aim of education is, presumably, to help the child develop to his fullest capacity, to enable him to become a whole man. Art is part of this wholeness, as art is a part of the wholeness of life, related to every other manifestation. Perhaps our art teachers — like our educators in other fields — tend too much to be specialists. Somewhat like artists (and poets and musicians), they tend to live incestuously within the boundaries of their own profession. The other arts are usually alien ground. Moreover, the "doing" art teacher often scorns the "historian of art" and vice versa. The psychologically oriented art teacher often sneers at the defender of craftsmanship. Art education should be, as Mr. Edman said, "an education in and of an enlightened imagination and in freedom." Thus, it must include the doing and the making on the one hand and the seeing and knowing and feeling on the other.*

— Aline B. Louchheim





*Photo Erp.*

### A SMALL CHALICE

This chalice was recently made for Rev. Thomas Phelan by Mr. Robert Clare of Boston. The problem was to design a chalice for a portable altar. The chalice was to be as small as possible without giving any impression of being like a toy. The node consists of a disk of silver, filed at its edge to suggest waves. The intention of this motive was to indicate the cosmic nature of the cup by reference to the "River Ocean of Potency." The base is another silver disk, somewhat similarly ornamented, which gives the vessel great stability. The whole chalice is exactly five inches high. The paten is unornamented.



# DISTINCTION BETWEEN SIGN AND SYMBOL



SIGN is a highly simplified copy of the appearance of something. The painted arrow by the highway bent into an S curve is a sign of the tortuous road that lies ahead. A symbol is a word, shape or gesture which by convention stands for an idea — an idea in itself, having no appearance to copy. The gilded ball on the top of a flagstaff probably stood originally for the sun, but it was a sign rather than a symbol, the roundness and golden color of the sun being copied. It is obviously a highly simplified statement of the appearance of a material thing.



But the polished black granite pyramidion set at the top of a huge pyramid by the ancient Egyptians was a true solar symbol. It stood for the sun by stating ideas about the sun, ideas both astronomical and metaphysical, in a highly diagrammatic way. To the learned Egyptian its square base spoke of the sun's relationship to the earth, which it marks out by means of the solstices and equinoxes as a great square. The four angles and sloping triangular sides diminishing upward to a point at which they vanished into nothingness spoke of the sun's dependence upon its invisible creator, and of its function as his agent of transmitting to material creatures below his gifts of goodness, truth and beauty. It was a true symbol in that it had the power of speaking to the initiated, in a language of the utmost economy and succinctness, truths that it would take many words to express verbally, if indeed all

could be so expressed. It is the materialization of a whole rich complex of traditional ideas in a stone of a simple geometric pattern. It does not look like the sun, but in a sense it behaves as the sun behaves, at least it is a manifestation of the sun's reality (rather than a copy of his appearance).



Now the point I wish to make is this. The sign, in this case the golden ball, could be recognized as the sun by a quite feeble intelligence. Such recognition requires no metaphysical powers. A hypothetical anthropoid, thinking thoughts half way between ape-thoughts and man-thoughts, can be conceived to recognize or even invent it. But the black pyramidion cannot be thought of as having anything to do with the sun except by highly intellectual people, and people who had already seen in the sun itself a symbol of God.



A sign may or may not be the product of an intellectually high culture, a true symbol must be. Anyone with eyes can see, but only a developed mind can think metaphysically.

*Graham Carey*



# FAITH AND WORDS

*Romano Guardini has written that "to restore to its original meaning a word that is being destroyed by careless use is a service to the whole of human life." (The Four Last Things, p. 101) Here Mr. Attwater shows to what extent the misuse and unfamiliar use of words can be a positive hindrance to Faith. This article originally appeared in the December, 1954, issue of Blackfriars.*

By Donald Attwater

"We haue on the one side auoided the scrupulositie of the Puritanes . . .; as also on the other side we haue shunned the obscuritie of the Papists, in their *Azimes*, *Tunike*, *Rational*, *Holocausts*, *Praepuce*, *Pasche*, and a number of such like."

". . . (Catholic) correspondence of a singular freshness, authentic eighteenth-century, and authentic English, mere English, indeed, and utterly free from the stereotyped half-foreign jargon that later generations were to experience."

"The fruits of the bloody sacrifice are superabundantly applied by the unbloody sacrifice."

"I saw Pfuff's 'Interrelated Harmony' described in the catalogue as a neo-amorphist experiment in intra-abstractionism. It is also an embodiment of universal mode-concepts, and the absence of stress emphasizes the integral tranquillity. Whirlpools of space would be a more accurate description of these non-emotional facets of dynamic passivity."

The first of these quotations is from the address to the reader of the translators of the Authorized Version of the Bible; the second is from a review in *The Times Literary Supplement*; the third is a contemporary theologian quoting from cap. 2 of session xxii of the Council of Trent; the fourth is from a satirical jape of "Beachcomber." They are part of the harvest of a little desultory reading, and serve well enough as an indication of what I want to talk — or rather, muse — about: words.

Everything, however small, that can be a hindrance to Faith is of importance; and as an experienced missionary has said, "language can in fact be a pretty effective hin-

drance." Even among those who fall over themselves in their concern to translate exactly (*incruentus* means "unbloody"), there is sometimes a tendency to dismiss matters of English terminology and vocabulary as not mattering.<sup>1</sup> Well, words can effect what they signify: "I, John, take you, Joan, for my wedded wife . . .", or, "Brown, you will go to prison for six months." But I am not concerned with things at that level. What interests me is the accumulated effect of the current terminology and vocabulary of Catholics in England in "putting off" those who have no Faith, or the content of whose Faith we believe to be insufficient, in discouraging them in their inquiries into or approach towards the Faith of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, there is the fact that much of this vocabulary is a discomfort and hindrance to some new converts, at the very time when their Faith needs nourishing and to be made "natural" to them. And not only new converts; not all who are so troubled get used to it; for some, the discomfort increases with the years, and is found to be a real and serious difficulty when it comes to trying to commend the Church's Faith to those who have it not. And this, of course, is not confined to converts. Perhaps people "ought" not to be affected by such considerations: but in fact they are.

<sup>1</sup> I may remind readers that the public was recently informed on the authority of a moral theologian that there are times when a Christian is allowed to be brutal. That means to emulate the brute beasts, and it is not an esoteric meaning. The harm done by such carelessness with words can hardly be exaggerated.



Better than by writing at large, by amateur philosophizing and chatter about semantics, I can perhaps make my point clear by taking a number of examples, almost at random; and, to emphasize that I am making notes and not writing a thesis, I will take them in alphabetical order. But I will start with an exception, for I have just used the word convert.

"A convert is one who turns to God after living far from him; or even one who already serves God faithfully but aims at greater perfection"—the words are Bishop Besson's. But for many the word "convert" inevitably connotes, say, the heathen of darkest Africa. I have myself heard a "new Catholic" say: "God's grace has touched me and I am reconciled with his Church. But I was truly baptized as a baby, and I have always tried to serve him—I am not a convert." I am not trying to get rid of the word in this connexion—that would be a waste of time; but I do suggest we should be more careful in our use of it. "Making converts." On our left hand we emphasize to the prospective Catholic that Faith is a free gift of God; and on our right we tell our neighbour, "I have made a convert." An accepted colloquialism, no doubt, but an unfortunate one. And it is tied up with the irritation (or amusement) of so many non-Catholics who feel that Catholics are always "getting at" them.

*Apparition*, a word inseparably associated with spooks in common speech. An inquirer who is bothered about Fatima, or even Lourdes, is not helped if we refer to visions or appearances of our Lady as "apparitions."

*Cenacle*. Every serious English Protestant knows that the Last Supper and the gathering at Pentecost took place in an upper room—but what is this? If it be insisted that *caenaculum* means a dining-room etymologically, well then, let us say so: that is at least intelligible, which the French word is not. And with apparitions and cenacles we should be well rid of many other single words: from obscurities and

unrealities such as benignity, longanimity, dolours, spouse, immoral and unlawful (for sinful or wicked), mediatrix (for mediatress) and so on, to such strangers as Josue, Osee and Noe of the ark. We cannot even call a shop a shop: it becomes a "repository."

*Favours*, God's favours. I invite the reader to recollect the ordinary use and connotation of 'favour' in English, and then to consider whether it be a suitable word to designate the graces and goodness of Almighty God, even his uncovenanted mercies. No wonder people think we think of God as an earthly father writ large—and with "favouritism" just round the corner: favouritism, a pernicious fault in any father of a family.

*Intolerance, tolerance*. Crucial words. Time and again Catholics speak of tolerance as meaning toleration of error or other evil, and we hear about "the duty of intolerance" in this sense. But that is not the sense of the word in ordinary speech. In day-to-day use, tolerance means "respect for the other man's conscience": already two hundred years ago intolerant was given the subsidiary meaning of "disposed to persecute those who differ," and that undertone it still has. We appear to be convicted of bigotry and desire to persecute out of our own mouths; it is folly to expect people to appreciate a distinction expressed in a meaning that is unfamiliar to their lifetime habits of thought and speech.

*Justice*. Many people are confused by reading and hearing familiar texts with the key-word "righteousness," etc., altered to one which they associate with courts of law and political oratory. Recent translations of the Bible are showing us a better way (as in plenty of other examples); but those translations are not yet part of our minds, and the inquirer continues to get a wrong or inadequate idea from our speech.

"*Outside the Church there is no salvation.*" It should not be necessary to refer to this expression, but it stands for a whole category and it still goes gaily on, doing all



the harm that a "misleading truth" can do. Quite simply, in the mouth of a theologian it does not mean what it conveys to the ears of a non-Catholic. Nobody wants to deprive the theologian of his technical ways of expressing himself in his textbooks and lecture-rooms; but we others look to him to respect the ordinary significance of simple words in our mother-tongue. This is but one glaring example among many; ordinary people cannot be expected to understand or master the esoteric language of theology any more than that of other sciences. This is a case where the meaning of the Latin should be rendered, not the words. Far from all Catholics understand this expression themselves.

*(Modern) Pagans.* I feel like Canute's courtiers after he got his feet wet. In Christian usage a pagan was by definition a religious man; a "modern pagan" is by definition an unreligious or godless man. Aristotle, Plato, Virgil, Seneca were pagans. Ought we to use the word as a mere term of abuse? Are people encouraged to consider Christianity by being called by what is meant to be a rude name? I have made my protest, and pass on.

*Patronage.* "We fly to thy patronage . . ." This word has three principal connotations in current speech: (1) the support which some artists and writers seem to expect as of right from the State or from rich men; (2) the personal distinction or monetary subscription entitling one to be listed among the patrons of some enterprise; (3) "patronizing airs." No one of these is relevant to the Mother of God. What is the matter with "protection?" By association, *patronus-clients*: "client of St. Aliquis." In English the word at once suggests a business relationship with a professional man. It has been remarked that some people would be better described as the customers of a saint. But seriously, such words are nothing but a hindrance.

*Practising the virtues.* English people attach meaning and importance to being

good, to being charitable, being honest, being chaste. But to speak of "practising" these virtues is foreign to us, and to many repulsive. It seems to suggest cold calculation, surface piety ("exteriority"! ), lack of depth and reality. Or even an unseemly literalizing of the metaphor in I Corinthians 9: 24-27, with all the emphasis on the training rather than the crown, the means rather than the end, doing rather than being. A very damaging phrase.

And what about *religious exercises*? "On the hands, down! One! Two!"

*Secret.* "Yesterday the Pope delivered an allocution (gave an address?) at a secret consistory," and similar usages. Cardinals padding about in noiseless slippers, Jesuits listening behind curtains, Dominicans stoking the fires — oh dear, oh dear! *Secretus, segreto* here only means "private."

*Supernatural.* This one is as difficult as it is important. The word is inevitably tainted by its everyday association with apparitions, ghosts and the like; and has it not got a certain artificial flavour in English? A necessary word cannot be avoided just because it has some misleading associations; but we could use "supernatural" less and "spiritual" more.\*

*Tradition.* The way we toss this word about to the confusion of inquirers is appalling. The Assumption, Latin at Mass, the St. Christopher story, and pancakes on Shrove Tuesday: each is, we say, traditional (unqualified). Yet, "by tradition I mean that body of revealed truth . . ." It would help people if at least we always distinguished in so many words between *the tradition of the Church* and *a tradition in the Church*, or among Catholics.

There, then, are a dozen words and phrases, varied and of unequal weight, which in form or content are unfamiliar to all, and discouraging in their cumula-

\* It is interesting to notice that Mr. Charles Williams, that master in the art of rejuvenating our decrepit language, has substituted, in his *Figure of Beatrice*, for "supernatural" his own term "arch-natural." *Ed.*



tive effect to many non-Catholic English-speakers. The list could be easily extended, and so could the whole subject, which would eventually involve the business of religious metaphor, and other prickly matters. But I think I have said enough to air the problem, which in any case has been aired before. Years ago that stalwart fighter in the Midlands (or as some would have it, warrior of the Mercian fyrd), Father F. H. Drinkwater, declared that "The ordinary Englishman undoubtedly finds us (Catholics) . . . too fond of technical language . . ." Something has been done since then, but not nearly enough; and there are still far too many other things in Catholicity as presented that do not "click with reality" for our neighbors. In this matter of vocabulary (as in that of a thoroughgoing reform of public worship) it is sometimes objected that serious changes would "scandalize and disturb the simple faithful." It is not my business here to examine the implications of that surprising objection. But perhaps I may point out that whatever there might be of that sort would all be over in one generation.

Such misuses or unfamiliar uses of language as I have instanced not only have their own proper importance: they are also one element, and a considerable one, in that "foreign look" of Catholicity in this country that is such a stumbling-block to our fellow-countrymen. Catholicity in England today is not English in the sense that our Catholicity was English in 1350, or even in 1750, or in the sense that there is today a German Catholicity, a French Catholicity, and so on. That foreignness has come from both east and west of us: it is a result of our particular ecclesiastical

history, and past history cannot be gainsaid. But future history can be influenced, and if the Catholic Faith is to be commended to the English people in general, we have got to think and feel as Englishmen — and talk English.

Catholicity is a fellowship, a unity in variety, not a suprahuman — and therefore inhuman — totalitarian system. When a man becomes a Catholic he still remains the same man, with his qualities of temperament and culture; he is not (or should not be) confronted with the task of acquiring a new culture, but of "catholicizing" what he has (so far as that may be necessary). When an Englishman is reconciled with the Catholic Church he does not (or should not) "cease to be an Englishman." Nor does he receive all and give nothing. Quite apart from the spiritual contribution that God's grace may enable him to make towards the good estate of the whole Body, he can make a contribution of culture, of *ethos*, of ways of thinking and doing, the chap at the garage as well as the don or man of affairs. One need not be an absurd chauvinist to think that one of the things that today could benefit the Universal Church on her human side, at the least for the commending of her to our fellow-countrymen, is a bigger element of what English people can give, precisely as English. Have those of us who are English (few enough, I know) all done all we might to make our own contribution as English men and women? If we had — even in a relatively subordinate matter like vocabulary — perhaps our neighbors would find the approaches to Faith somewhat less hard, discouraging, and frightening than they do.





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